



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food Safety and
Inspection Service

Volume 11, Issue 2
January 23, 2009



FSIS Constituent Update

Protecting Public Health Through Food Safety and Food Defense

USDA and New Secretary Tom Vilsack Welcome Each Other

After being sworn in Wednesday as the 30th Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, the former two-term Iowa governor spent time the next morning greeting employees as they arrived for work at the USDA headquarters South Building. Vilsack and his wife, Ann Christine “Christie” Bell, surprised workers as they entered the building, shaking hands and answering questions.

Speaking to USDA employees Thursday at his official welcoming, Vilsack told employees about his plans for the Department and about himself. Health and nutrition are among the issues Vilsack is expected to place high on the Department’s agenda. One of the biggest challenges facing the new secretary is writing rules to implement the latest farm bill. Video of his address to employees is available on the USDA home page at www.usda.gov.

Named governor of the year in 2001 by the Biotechnology Industry Organization, he supported subsidies for corn growers who produce ethanol. Agriculture has a role in shaping climate change, Vilsack contends, pointing to carbon credits and conservation programs as revenue sources for rural America.

Vilsack, 58, first gained national attention as one of the first democratic candidates to run for president. He left the race before the primaries, then endorsed Senator Hillary Clinton and served as co-chair of her national campaign.

Although making his mark in Iowa, Vilsack has eastern roots. Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, he was adopted from a local orphanage. He graduated from Hamilton College in New York and received his

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Export Requirement Updates



The Library of Export Requirements has been updated to reflect changes in export requirements for the following:

Australia

Complete information can be found at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&Policies/Export_Information/index.asp.

FSIS Resources

Tune in and subscribe to podcasts that offer helpful information on the selection, handling and preparation of meat and poultry products to reduce the risk of foodborne illness.



Visit www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&Events/Multimedia/index.asp to view informative food safety podcasts.

Secretary Vilsack...

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law degree from the Albany Law School in 1975. Vilsack then moved to his wife's home state of Iowa to begin his law career.

The new secretary went on to serve as mayor of Mount Pleasant, Iowa, a state senator and the first Iowa democrat in 30 years to be elected governor in 1998, serving two terms while republicans held majorities in the state's general assembly. During the 2008 fall semester, he was a political fellow at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Ron Hicks Is Named Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety

Today, the new Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack issued a memorandum designating his temporary management team.

Ronald F. Hicks was named Acting Deputy Under Secretary to lead the Office of Food Safety during the interim of the incoming administration. His extensive experience will bring great benefit to the Agency as this administration shapes its vision for a productive transition.

Hicks recently served as FSIS' Chief Operating Officer. In this position, he monitored the daily operations of the Agency with a focus on the design, operations and improvement of FSIS' management systems.

He also served as an Assistant Administrator for the Office of Program Evaluation, Enforcement and Review (OPEER), Acting



Associate Administrator for FSIS as well as Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Office of Management.

Mr. Hicks, a native of Washington, D.C., graduated from Anacostia High School in 1969. Thereafter he attended Catholic University of America on a basketball scholarship and captained the team in 1973. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Political Science and went on to earn his law degree from Catholic University, Columbia School of Law in 1976.

Update on FSIS testing for *E. coli* O157:H7

In June 2008, FSIS began to offer weekly updates of *E. coli* testing data through the *FSIS Constituent Update*. The Agency regularly samples raw beef from establishments and tests for the presence of *E. coli* O157:H7 at its laboratories.

The weekly update featured a table to illustrate year-to-date information for 2007 and 2008 for raw ground beef and raw ground beef components.

FSIS began posting testing results in January 2009 for *E. coli* O157:H7 on the Agency's Web site instead of in the *FSIS Constituent Update*.

Go to www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Ground_Beef_E.Coli_Testing_Results/index.asp to find FSIS testing results for *E. coli* O157:H7 in raw ground beef sampling programs.



FSIS Extends Comment Period on Draft Risk Assessment for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

On December 2, 2008, FSIS published a *Federal Register* notice requesting comments for a draft quantitative food safety risk assessment for highly pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI).

FSIS is extending the comment period for this risk assessment for an additional 30 days to March 4.

FSIS intends to review and evaluate all public comments and make modifications to the assessment as appropriate. The draft risk assessment is available on FSIS' Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Risk_Assessments/index.asp.

Comments can be sent to the Docket Clerk, U.S. Department of Agriculture-FSIS, 1400 Independence Avenue S.W., South Building Room 2534, Washington, D.C. Submissions may also be received through the Federal eRulemaking Portal at www.regulations.gov.

All submissions received must reference the Food Safety and Inspection Service and include docket number FSIS-2007-0001.

For further details on the risk assessment, contact Neal J. Golden, Office of Public Health Science, at (202) 690-6419 or at Neal.Golden@fsis.usda.gov.

FSIS Program Area Undergoes a Slight Shift

FSIS has recently renamed its Office of Food Defense and Emergency Response to the Office of Data Integration and Food Protection to better describe, overall, the key functions of the program area.

The Office of Data Integration and Food Protection develops, maintains and coordinates all FSIS activities to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies resulting from

non-intentional contamination or deliberate acts of terrorism affecting meat, poultry and egg products.

The office also coordinates data analyses and integration activities of FSIS as well as the development and maintenance of predictive analytics, a system that integrates and analyzes multiple data streams to determine trends and patterns that may be of public health significance.

FSIS Offers Super Bowl Tips

Many Super Bowl parties go on for several hours where food will often be left at room temperature and can easily allow bacteria to multiply and cause illness. FSIS offers this food safety guide for the big game.

Personal Foul, Illegal Use of Hands

- Clean* - Wash hands and surfaces often. Unclean hands are one of the biggest culprits for spreading bacteria.

Blocking

- Separate* - Don't cross-contaminate. Keep raw meat and poultry apart from cooked foods. The juices from the raw meat can contain harmful bacteria that cross contaminates other foods.

False Start

- Cook* - A false start in food safety occurs when partially or undercooked food is served. Color is **not** a reliable indicator, use a food thermometer!

Blitz

- Chill* - Leftovers? Refrigerate or freeze food promptly.

Upon Further Review

You can also be sure that you are making the right call when it comes to - USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854).

Register for FSIS "How To" Workshops for Small and Very Small Plants

FSIS will hold a series of "how to" workshops to provide practical tools and methods for proper application and compliance.

These outreach workshops will cover various information such as developing controls for *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*, establishing effective sanitation practices, developing food defense plans, ensuring humane handling of livestock and conducting product recalls.

Visit www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Outreach_Sessions_SVS_Plants/index.asp to register for a workshop. Individuals may also register by phone at 1-800-336-3747. Pre-registration is not required but it is highly encouraged.

January 24 - Dallas, Texas 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Crowne Plaza Dallas Park Central 7800 Alpha Road	January 30 - Atlanta, Georgia 1:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. Doubletree Hotel Atlanta Northwest Marietta 2055 South Park Place
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USDA Hosts Codex Public Meeting on Fats and Oils

USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services' Food and Drug Administration announced a public meeting to discuss information and receive public comments on agenda items to draft U.S. positions that will be discussed at the 21st Session of the Codex Committee on Fats and Oils (CCFO) of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, to be held in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia.

The public meeting will be held on Monday, January 26 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. in the back conference area of the South Agricultural Building's cafeteria located at 1400 Independence Avenue S.W., Washington, D.C.

Documents and agenda items related to the 21st Session of the CCFO are accessible at the Codex Web site at www.codexalimentarius.net/current.asp.

For further information about the public meeting, contact Syed Ali at (202) 205-7760 or Syed.Ali@fsis.usda.gov.